

# Southside Worship Online

15 November 2020 Rev David MacGregor **RESPONSE**



Southside Uniting Church acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we gather, the Turrbal and Jagera peoples and clans, and we pay our respects to the elders past, present and future. We continue to work for reconciliation.

To access the worship service go to  
<https://livestream.com/ggservices/ssuc>

## Preparing for worship

Find a comfortable space, e.g. around a table or living room ... and light a candle. Families with children are encouraged to use family faith materials  
Ps Richard Moors has made available

## Welcome

**But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.** Psalm 86:15 (NRSV)

For just this hour,

**Follow me**

Listen to my word

**Follow me**

Think about your life as my disciple every day

**Follow me**

Pray

**Follow me**

Sing

**Follow me**

Come, let us worship God!

**Song of Praise**      *What a beautiful name*

## Prayers of Confession

Almighty God,  
you love us, but we have not loved you;  
you call, but we have not listened.  
We walk away from neighbours in need,  
wrapped up in our own concerns.  
We have gone along with evil,  
with prejudice, warfare, and greed.

God our Father,  
help us to face up to ourselves,  
so that, as you move toward us in mercy,  
we may repent, turn to you, and receive forgiveness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*From UIW2*

**A Contemporary Word/Reading**      *Jonah 3*

**Song**      *The Jonah Song*

*Jonah (Jonah)*  
*Go down to Nineveh*  
*Jonah (Jonah)*  
*Tell them straight*  
*40 days to turn back to God*  
*And if they don't (if they don't)*  
*They'll meet their fate*

1. Jonah instead he runs away  
Starts sailing to Tarshish  
Thrown over in a howling gale  
Gets swallowed by a giant fish

*Jonah (Jonah) - go down to Nineveh  
Jonah (Jonah) – tell them straight  
40 days to turn back to God  
And if they don't (if they don't)  
They'll meet their fate*

2. Jonah, he fesses up to God  
Gets thrown up on dry land  
Tell Nineveh again, says God  
their awful fate's at hand

3. The Ninevites they heed God's word  
They're sorry for all their ways  
The love of God comes out on top  
Those Ninevites – they all are saved

*Jonah (Jonah)  
Know the amazing news  
Hey there! (hey there!)  
Get it straight!  
God calls us all to live God's way  
And best of all -God's love is great!*

David MacGregor. © 2020 Willow Publishing

## Offering

*We take a moment to set aside our offering to God's mission and pray a prayer of blessing over it.*

## Prayers of the People

Gracious, eternal God, we thank you that when Jesus' calls to be disciples  
it usually came in such an uneventful way. Unlike Jonah who had much to contend with!  
We pray that your call, "Come, follow me," might again reverberate through our lives today.

May we hear again the challenge to be your disciples, the bearers of your good news through Jesus.  
May we hear again eternal words of hope which tell us that however dark the world becomes,  
the darkness cannot ever overcome the light of this holy one, Jesus.  
May we hear again those simple words: "Come, follow me," and may we come,  
just as we are, and know again the depth of your grace and love for us.  
Give us the power to bring change and transformation to the peoples of the world as did those early fishermen.  
Give us the power to provide the same kind of hope for the world-weary as they brought to theirs.  
Give us the vision of a world transformed.

We pray for those whose health is a constant and major concern at this time.  
Be especially with those whose health is compromised so much, especially in these pandemic times,  
that they have no hope of ever feeling totally well again.  
God of grace, grant them your hope, peace and comfort.  
*We spend a time of silence for these folk ...*

Adapted from prayer by  
Richard J. Einerson

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Song

*Jesus Christ is Waiting*

## Sent in Mission / Blessing

As you go out into the world

**Follow me**

At home with your household

**Follow me**

At school and work

**Follow me**

In everything you do this week

**Follow me**

And as you do, remember that I am with you always,  
even to the end of the world.

OPENING & CLOSING LITANIES  
by Carolyn Brown, in  
[Worshipping with Children](#)

## Sermon notes

### Jonah 3: RESPONSE

**Response.** That's our Jonah theme today.

The scriptures tell us, "The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time." We all know what happened the first time. God said, "Get up and go to Nineveh" Go to Nineveh? You're kidding, God. So Jonah responds by running away ... away from God, then God responds - God sends a storm. You know the next bits, one response after the other. Finally, according to the scriptures, a huge fish spits out Jonah onto dry land.



#### **SPEND SOME TIME READING JONAH – Chapter 3.**

God speaks to Jonah a second time: "Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Nineveh! Preach to them. They're in a bad way and I can't ignore it any longer." This time Jonah starts off straight for Nineveh, obeying God's orders to the letter. Different response completely ... Jonah obeys. He walks into the city, one day's journey AND preaches the shortest sermon ever recorded: "Forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown!" Possibly the most effective sermon ever preached. Immediately, the people of Nineveh – the whole city - believe God, The people declare a fast. The king orders human and animal alike to fast and put on sackcloth. Then all concerned, animals and people alike bellow out their repentance to God, and ultimately God changes God's mind about the punishment, and does not bring it about. Now, if that was my sermon I'd be over the moon. Mass conversion – humans, animals alike. But not Jonah. Jonah's not ecstatic... he's mad

"Ah, LORD, is this not what I said would happen when I was still in my own territory? That's why I fled to Tarshish in the first place. Because I know that you are a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing." Here we have Jonah quoting those words we find time and time again in the Old Testament. Words that encapsulate the heart of God. BUT Jonah doesn't affirm these great words, it is an accusation. It's Jonah screaming,

You, God, are gracious and merciful. I declared your judgment on this sinful city, and you changed your mind! I love the way Kathryn Schifferdecker reflects on all this ... [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2347](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2347)

*Here's the thing, you see, here's the thing all of us have found out about following the call of God in and through the waters: God is God and does not act as we think the Almighty should act. In good faith, we follow where we hear God's call ... we are prepared to bring God's word to that place, and what we find is that God is already there before us. We find that no people, and no place, not even Nineveh, can properly be called God-forsaken.*

Poor Jonah. He just can't get a handle on who God really is. Can't come to grips that when God's true colours come shining through, God is indeed revealed as "God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love". (Psalm 86:15) He just doesn't get it. Isn't there a bit of Jonah in each of us. We have those we find difficult to love, who so rub us up the wrong way, who we really struggle to get on with, who we may well avoid. Remember ... God loves that person. God loves that person.

The same God who gives Jonah a second chance gives the people of Nineveh a second chance. How can we possibly begrudge that kind of mercy ... the mercy of God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love ... God we know most fully in Jesus Christ. Jesus died for that person. For them, for you, for me. God's love response. God, being mighty God could have said, "Enough" to our sinfulness, our waywardness, our arrogance, our turning our backs on God.

But in Jesus, God indeed says, "Enough" and so Jesus, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" dies out of obedience, out of love ... for our salvation ... for the hope of the world. The good news response. The love response. It's a response that calls from us, response. A response to share that response, in faith, hope, in joy, in love ... that as John 17 puts it that the world, just like ancient Nineveh might believe in God, who in Jesus, is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." Let's make that our response, in the creative hand of God, the love of Jesus and the power and giftings of the Holy Spirit.

**Rev DAVID MACGREGOR**